



41 BEDFORD SQUARE and 11 BEDFORD AVENUE
LONDON WC1B 3HX

INTERNAL RENOVATION OF OFFICE AND AMENITY ACCOMMODATION, MINOR ALTERATIONS
AND GENERAL UPGRADE OF THE BUILDING
Application for listed building consent: 2016/2865/L

31 June 2016

The Bloomsbury Association is generally supportive of this application but wishes to make the following comments.

1. The heritage statement accompanying the application is misleading. 11 Bedford Avenue is not a coach house, it was not reconstructed in the 1980s, nor can it be discounted as being of 'no heritage significance'. This suggests that the rear of the building facing Bedford Avenue makes minimal contribution to its setting or to the setting of the rear part of the main building when it is a vital part of a red brick composition created on the redevelopment of Caroline Mews into Tavistock Street (as it was then) by the Duke of Bedford from 1890-1896 on demolition of the original coach houses and stables to form Bedford Court Mansions.

A report in the *The Building News* on 20 April 1894 states: "*Bedford-court Mansions enjoy many advantages; for instance, no building can be erected opposite on the north side of Tavistock-street, as an expensive ornamental wall is now being built along the whole length to close in backs of this Bedford-square houses... The elevation is of red brick and white stone, and is intended to be continued the length of the new street, thus forming a complete façade of about 700ft. in length.*" The importance of this wall is recognised in the Council's document, *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy*.

The largest changes to the properties forming the south side of Bedford Square however took place in the late 20th century. The acquisition by the Abbey Life Assurance Company Ltd of the freehold of the 14 Grade I listed houses (Nos. 40- 53) saw their phased conversion into offices in the years after 1970. This was undertaken by Ellis Clarke & Gallenough, the first phase of which (Nos. 41, 42, 47, 48 & 53) earned a Civic Trust Award in 1975.

So this is a sensitive, award-winning, early 70's infill behind a brick façade dating from 1894 that is within the curtilage of an older Grade I listed building. It is acknowledged as making an important contribution to the setting of the older Georgian buildings facing Bedford Square and is recorded in Camden's *Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy* as a positive contributor to the Conservation Area. The applicant's architects should be aware of these basic essentials and they should inform the proposal.

2. With the recent sale of all the buildings on the south side of Bedford Square and the resulting fragmented ownership, there is a risk that the programme of refurbishment of the frontages to Bedford Avenue that was begun by their more immediate past owners, Crown Estates, will not be completed.

The elegant ornamental brick and Portland stone screen wall to the south sides of these buildings was constructed by the Duke of Bedford in 1894 and mirrors the architecture of Bedford Court Mansions opposite. After years of neglect, this wall is now very grimy. Indeed, it is so dirty that Camden Council has had to install additional street lighting to manage incidences of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and drug use on this side of the street.

When 49, 50, 51, 52 and 53 Bedford Square were refurbished at different times a few years ago, their respective sections of the Bedford Avenue ornamental wall were cleaned (see photo). The transformation by simply removing years of grime is astonishing. Indeed, the Bedford Avenue wall to number 53 is currently being cleaned again and we understand that number 42 is soon also to be cleaned. We would hope that, as more buildings on the south side of the Square are brought forward for refurbishment through the planning process, the Council will be proactive in ensuring that the Conservation Area is enhanced by requiring that further sections of the Bedford Avenue wall are also cleaned until its entire length is complete. We note that this is not presently included in the applicant's proposal, which seems an odd omission for such a major refurbishment, and urge the Council to ensure that it is, if necessary through separate legal agreement.



3. Section 7 of the application form states that there is no provision for storage of waste on the premises, contrary to LDF Policy DP6, and no waste management plan is included in the application. Currently the applicant's waste is well managed. It is stored in the building, bagged and placed on the footway outside 11 Bedford Avenue early each morning for collection. This is satisfactory but we would prefer it to be conditioned to prevent waste being deposited on the footway overnight, as appears to happen with buildings on either side at 9 and 13-15 Bedford Avenue (see photos below). Waste containers should not be kept on the footway.



4. This is a substantial construction project in a sensitive location. Currently major construction work is being undertaken at 42 Bedford Square and a second phase of refurbishment is anticipated soon for l'École Jeannine Manuel at 43-45 Bedford Square. Major construction work is also underway at 1 Bedford Avenue and at 15 Adeline Place. Clearly there is already a major impact on residential and business amenity by these works all taking place concurrently in the same location but with different contractors. A construction management plan must be agreed

with the residents of Bedford Court Mansions and adjoining owners and submitted for consideration prior to the application being determined. This should specifically exclude use of the paved area of Bedford Square to facilitate construction or for parking contractors' vehicles; it should limit construction access and deliveries from Bedford Square and should manage access from Bedford Avenue, particularly during the strip-out stage.

We would be grateful if you would let us know of any further modification to the application; the decision, if it is to be decided under delegated powers, or the meeting date if it is to be decided by Committee.

Stephen Heath
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Copies to:
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